

*From the principal's desk...*

Dear Families,

Happy New Year! On behalf of the teachers and staff at one of the nation's top elementary schools, may 2011 bring joy and comfort to you all. 2011 will be a year of many new changes at Douglass with exciting improvements underway.

As many of you know, our school will receive some much-needed renovation beginning this summer. For the past six months, a committee of teachers, parents, architects, and construction managers reviewed blueprints and updated a needs assessment of our building. The architects will submit our project plans to the market for bid, with the general contractor selected by the end of February.

The renovation will include a new main entrance to the school with enhanced security; a remodeled library; an elevator to promote full access to all community members by the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms; and a new preschool classroom. Construction should begin as soon as school is out in late May, and should be completed in phases by the summer of 2012.

This week, our teachers began introducing the Accelerated Reader program to students. This is a reading comprehension software that was purchased this year thanks to the generous support of our PTO. Accelerated Reader (AR) will be available to all students and has demonstrated success at thousands of schools nationwide in elevating the number of books that students read. Look for more information from your child's teacher about AR and how it will be used in your child's class.

There are a few district-wide changes that I want to make sure you are aware of. First, the district has a new annual volunteer screening process effective January 3, 2011. There is a fee for each background check. If you regularly volunteer at Douglass, and have already completed a Volunteer Agreement, you are cleared to continue volunteering through the end of the 2010-2011 school year. This new process also includes a background and motor vehicle history check for parents who drive students on field trips.

I sent an email earlier this week explaining the purpose of this change. While I understand that many parents aren't pleased with the change, particularly in the \$20 fee for each background screening, nothing is more important to me as principal than the safety of our kids. I'm more than happy to discuss this policy change with you individually and assist financially if necessary, but I fully support the district's goal of fostering a safe school environment.

Finally, enrollment for Kindergarten classes this fall has begun! If you have a child that turns 5 by October 1, I encourage you to register as soon as possible! Spread the word to neighbors and friends that live inside Douglass' attendance boundaries – enrollment is all on-line at <http://enroll.bvsvd.org>.

Again, best wishes to you all for the best new year yet.

Your principal,

Jon Wolfer